

**WORK ENVIRONMENT, CAREER DEVELOPMENT, AND EMPLOYEE
RETENTION: EVIDENCE FROM STEAK CHEFS IN SURABAYA AND TUBAN**

**LINGKUNGAN KERJA, PENGEMBANGAN KARIR, DAN RETENSI
KARYAWAN: BUKTI DARI CHEF STEAK DI SURABAYA DAN TUBAN**

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ABSTRACT

The high turnover rate among steak chefs in Indonesia's restaurant industry raises major challenges, including escalating training costs, operational instability, and inconsistent food quality. This study examines the influence of work environment and career development on employee retention among steak chefs. A quantitative survey method was applied to 32 respondents selected through purposive sampling in two branches of Restaurant X located in Surabaya and Tuban. Data were analyzed using multiple linear regression through JASP 18 software. The findings reveal that both the work environment ($\beta = 0.489$, $p = 0.029$) and career development ($\beta = 0.686$, $p < 0.001$) significantly and positively affect employee retention, with career development demonstrating the stronger effect. The regression model explains 74.5% of the variance in employee retention ($R^2 = 0.745$), indicating a strong predictive ability. These results contribute to the hospitality management literature by showing that structured development programs are more influential than environmental comfort in motivating skilled chefs to remain with their organization. Practically, the study provides managerial insights for restaurants to enhance retention through clear career pathways, competency-based training, and supportive working conditions.

Keywords: employee retention, work environment, career development, steak chefs, restaurants

ABSTRAK

Tingkat turnover koki steak yang tinggi di industri restoran Indonesia menimbulkan berbagai tantangan, seperti meningkatnya biaya pelatihan, ketidakstabilan operasional, dan ketidakkonsistenan kualitas hidangan. Penelitian ini bertujuan menguji pengaruh lingkungan kerja dan pengembangan karier terhadap retensi karyawan pada koki steak. Pendekatan survei kuantitatif diterapkan kepada 32 responden yang dipilih melalui teknik purposive sampling dari dua cabang Restaurant X di Surabaya dan Tuban. Data dianalisis menggunakan regresi linier berganda melalui software JASP 18. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa lingkungan kerja ($\beta = 0.489$, $p = 0.029$) dan pengembangan karier ($\beta = 0.686$, $p < 0.001$) berpengaruh positif dan signifikan terhadap retensi karyawan, dengan pengembangan karier memiliki pengaruh yang lebih kuat. Model regresi mampu menjelaskan 74,5% varians retensi karyawan ($R^2 = 0.745$), yang mengindikasikan kemampuan prediksi yang kuat. Secara teoretis, penelitian ini memperkaya literatur manajemen restoran dengan menunjukkan bahwa program pengembangan karier yang terstruktur lebih berperan dalam mendorong koki berkompeten untuk bertahan dibandingkan kenyamanan lingkungan kerja semata. Secara praktis, penelitian ini memberikan rekomendasi bagi manajemen restoran untuk meningkatkan retensi melalui jalur karier yang jelas, pelatihan berbasis kompetensi, dan kondisi kerja yang mendukung.

Kata Kunci: Retensi Karyawan, Lingkungan Kerja, Pengembangan Karier, Koki Steak, Restoran

INTRODUCTION

Employee retention has become increasingly important in the modern workplace, particularly in service industries such as restaurants. Field observations and preliminary interviews with steakhouse owners and managers in Indonesia indicate that steak chefs experience a high rate of turnover. This turnover creates operational instability,

increases training costs, and reduces the consistency of dish quality [16]. In practice, management faces significant challenges in retaining skilled and experienced steak chefs over the long term.

According to Herzberg's Two Factor Theory [11] or motivation hygiene theory, two major components

influence employee retention: motivating factors (such as opportunities for career development) and hygiene factors (such as the work environment). This perspective is supported by data from the Indonesian Culinary Association [2], which reports that more than 30% of professional kitchen staff turnover each year, with the primary causes being dissatisfaction with working conditions and limited opportunities for development.

Previous studies, [18] have highlighted the importance of a supportive work environment in increasing employee loyalty within the service industry. However, a significant gap remains: the majority of this research examines restaurant employees generally [19], and has not specifically focused on specialized roles like steak chefs. Similarly, while the relationship between career opportunities and work motivation has been explored [3], the context often involves the entire restaurant staff. This generalization overlooks the unique characteristics of high-skill positions, such as the intensive labor, specialized expertise, and high-pressure environment inherent to a steak chef's role [9]. This study addresses this theoretical gap by focusing exclusively on steak chefs.

Therefore, this research is distinct in its focus on this specialized workforce within the Indonesian steakhouse context. The purpose of this study is to examine how the work environment and career development opportunities influence employee retention among steak chefs in Indonesia.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This study uses two types of variables: the dependent variable (DV) and independent variables (IV). The dependent variable in this research is employee retention, which refers to a

company's ability to retain its employees over a certain period. In this context, employee retention focuses on the stability of steak chefs in the restaurant industry, measured through indicators such as tenure, loyalty to the company, intention to remain, and the actual turnover rate.

The independent variables consist of the work environment and career development opportunities. The work environment variable includes physical, social, and psychological conditions that influence employee comfort, satisfaction, and productivity within the organization [17]. Meanwhile, the career development variable reflects opportunities provided by the company to motivate employees to stay, such as skill enhancement, training, and advancement into higher positions. Factors within these variables include physical work conditions (facilities, cleanliness, safety), interpersonal relationships, managerial support, workload, and stress levels experienced by employees.

Several theoretical frameworks are relevant to employee retention [4]. Maslow's hierarchy of needs suggests that employees remain in an organization when their basic needs such as job security and opportunities for growth are fulfilled [7]. Social exchange theory further explains that reciprocal relationships between employees and the company, such as supportive work environments and career opportunities, can strengthen [21]. Job satisfaction theory also asserts that employees with high satisfaction shaped by career development opportunities and a supportive work environment are more likely to remain employed.

Theories related to the work environment provide additional foundations for this analysis. Work stress theory argues that an unsupportive

work environment increases stress and turnover, while a positive environment reduces stress and improves retention. Herzberg's motivation hygiene theory similarly notes that motivational factors (career development) and hygiene factors (working conditions) significantly influence satisfaction and retention.

Career development theories also play a key role in this study. Career path theory states that employees who have clear career trajectories and development opportunities are more motivated to stay. Organizational learning theory posits that companies offering continuous training and development improve employee competence and loyalty.

Previous research has shown that strong employee retention contributes to higher productivity and lower recruitment costs. A supportive work environment characterized by adequate facilities, managerial support, and positive coworker relationships reduces turnover. Career development opportunities also influence employee satisfaction and loyalty; employees who receive training and see clear advancement opportunities tend to be more satisfied and committed to staying. Studies on the relationship between work environment and retention indicate that employees working in unhealthy environments experience higher stress and are more likely to leave. Research on career development and retention also shows that when employees perceive opportunities for growth, they are more loyal and likely to stay longer.

These findings align with the main purpose of this study: to further investigate the factors influencing employee retention, particularly career development and the work environment.

Independent Variables (IV): Work Environment and Career Development

The two core components of this study are the work environment and career development. The work environment encompasses physical and psychological conditions, including social support from colleagues and supervisors. A supportive work environment reduces stress and fatigue, contributing to employee satisfaction and loyalty. Career development includes opportunities for training, upskilling, and advancement through a clear career path. When employees have opportunities to grow professionally, they feel more motivated and secure, which in turn increases their commitment to the organization. These two factors are essential for maintaining workforce stability in the restaurant industry, especially in businesses with high turnover rates.

Dependent Variable (DV): Employee Retention

In this study, the primary dependent variable is employee retention, which refers to how effectively a company can retain its employees over a specific period. Employee retention is influenced by several factors, including job satisfaction, loyalty, and the intention to remain with the organization. Job satisfaction itself is strongly shaped by the quality of the work environment and the availability of career development opportunities. When employees feel valued and satisfied, they tend to be more loyal and committed to staying, thereby reducing turnover. Strong retention is particularly important in the steakhouse industry, where service quality and technical expertise are essential for daily operations.

Several factors may influence the variables examined in this study. These

include a work environment characterized by safe and comfortable physical conditions, supportive relationships with colleagues, responsive management, and effective management of stress and workload. When these conditions are met, dissatisfaction can be minimized and workplace comfort improved. Career development factors—such as ongoing training opportunities, clear career paths, and recognition of professional achievements—also increase satisfaction and commitment by motivating employees to remain with the company. Employee retention is therefore driven by positive relationships within the organization, job satisfaction, and the intention to stay. High retention ultimately reduces recruitment and training costs while enhancing service quality.

These factors directly relate to the research background. A supportive work environment fosters comfort and loyalty by reducing stress and improving job satisfaction. Clear and continuous career development opportunities motivate employees and strengthen their confidence in their future growth within the company. Employee retention, as the dependent variable, reflects the combined effect of the work environment and career development, which together determine workforce stability and the overall quality of restaurant services. Thus, this study not only identifies turnover problems but also offers a theoretical and practical foundation for developing effective human resource strategies in steakhouses.

A clear explanation of the relationship between the independent and dependent variables supported by previous studies is essential for formulating the research hypotheses. The following subsection outlines the logical basis for hypothesis development.

Work Environment and Employee Retention

A positive work environment, both physically and psychologically, significantly influences how long employees remain with a company [17]. According to Herzberg, hygiene factors such as comfortable working conditions and strong managerial support help prevent dissatisfaction [11]. This is crucial as an unsupportive environment increases stress and turnover, while a positive environment improves retention [18]. A work environment that provides psychological and physical support positively influences employee retention [1]. Research indicates that the non-physical environment including managerial support and communication is particularly influential in boosting retention [6]. Furthermore, meeting needs such as Work-Life Balance and providing safe physical conditions reduces job dissatisfaction, which is a major contributor to turnover in the Indonesian culinary sector [15]. These findings are supported by Taufek and Haron [20] who confirmed the positive effect of a supportive work environment in the service sector.

Thus, the work environment acts as a foundational factor that improves job satisfaction, which, in turn, is directly linked to the decision of employees to remain with the organization.

Career Development and Employee Retention

Career development is a key determinant of employee retention. This variable reflects opportunities provided by the company to motivate employees to stay, such as skill enhancement, training, and advancement into higher positions [3]. According to previous research, self actualization at the top of Maslow's hierarchy of needs reflects an

individual's desire to reach their full potential through opportunities such as training and skill development [7]. This is particularly relevant for millennial workers, who place high value on personal and professional growth. When companies provide meaningful development opportunities and recognize employee achievements, employees become more loyal and motivated to remain with the organization [14; 8]. This contributes directly to reduced turnover and improved workforce stability. For specialized roles like chefs, the provision of professional training and support is crucial for long-term retention [10].

In summary, when employees perceive clear pathways for growth and receive support for skill enhancement, they experience higher job satisfaction. This psychological contract fulfillment is essential, as elevated satisfaction directly increases their motivation and intent to stay with the company, thereby solidifying employee retention [12].

Interaction of Work Environment and Career Development on Retention

Employee retention is also shaped by the interaction between job satisfaction, career development, and the work environment. An effective retention strategy integrates both elements by creating a supportive work atmosphere and offering opportunities for growth. This combination reduces employees' intention to leave and increases their commitment. Therefore, the dependent variable employee retention is influenced synergistically by both independent variables.

Hypotheses Development

A positive work environment is a critical factor in enhancing employee retention. Comfortable working

conditions and strong managerial support foster satisfaction and loyalty, increasing the likelihood that employees will remain with the company.

H1: The work environment has a positive effect on employee retention.

Clear and sustainable career development opportunities are also primary drivers of retention. Training, upskilling, and transparent career paths promote employee commitment.

H2: Career development has a positive effect on employee retention.

When combined, career development and the work environment create a stronger effect on retention by providing both support and growth opportunities.

H3: The work environment and career development simultaneously have a positive effect on employee retention.

METHODS

This study involved employees from Restaurant X, who were selected as participants or respondents. This section explains the research participants, research procedures, and instruments used.

Research Participants

The study included 35 employees from Restaurant X located in the Surabaya City branch and the Tuban City branch. The sample was selected using a purposive sampling technique, with inclusion criteria requiring respondents to have a minimum of six months of work experience and to be actively involved in workplace activities and career development programs implemented by Restaurant X.

Research Procedure

This study employed a quantitative survey method. Closed ended questionnaires were distributed directly

to employees who met the sampling criteria to collect the necessary data. After data collection, the responses were cleaned and coded before being analyzed. Multiple linear regression analysis was then conducted to examine the effect of the work environment and career development on employee retention.

Measurement Tools and Instruments

Data were collected using a closed-ended questionnaire based on a five-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree). The questionnaire measured three primary variables and their respective indicators:

1. **Work Environment (IV):** Assesses the overall conditions influencing job comfort, satisfaction, and productivity. The indicators derived from the questionnaire items are categorized as follows:
 - **Physical Work Conditions:** Measures the adequacy of physical setting, including cleanliness, lighting, temperature, and availability of facilities.
 - **Safety and Comfort:** Measures employees' perception of security and overall comfort while performing their duties.
 - **Social and Managerial Support:** Measures the quality of social support from colleagues and superiors, and the effectiveness of communication between employees and management.
 - **Psychological Environment:** Measures how the environment contributes to motivation and helps in reducing stress and supporting productivity.
2. **Career Development (IV):** Assesses the opportunities provided by the company for professional growth and skill enhancement. The indicators used include:

- **Training Opportunities:** Measures the availability and relevance of training programs for skill enhancement.

- **Career Path Clarity:** Measures the clarity of career tracks, promotion information, and the perceived fairness of promotion opportunities.

- **Development Support:** Measures the company's commitment and support for employees to develop new skills and attention to career growth.

3. **Employee Retention (DV):** Reflects employees' psychological and behavioral inclination to remain with the company in the long term. The indicators used include:

- **Intention to Remain:** Measures the employees' strong intent to stay for the long term and resistance to external offers.

- **Job Satisfaction and Loyalty:** Measures the level of satisfaction with existing conditions and opportunities, and feelings of loyalty and commitment to contribute.

- **Valuation and Work-Life Balance:** Measures the perception of being valued/recognized for contributions and the company's provision of a good work-life balance.

Instrument Quality Test

Reliability Test

The reliability of the research instrument was assessed using the Cronbach's Alpha coefficient. An instrument is considered reliable if the calculated Cronbach's Alpha value is greater than the standard threshold, typically 0.70. The reliability test results for each variable are presented in Table 3 below:

**Tabel 3.1. Work Environment (LK)
Scale Reliability Test Results**

Item	Item-Rest Correlation	α	Conclusion
Scale Summary	-	0.796	Reliable
LK_1	0.361	0.793	Valid
LK_2	0.347	0.795	Valid
LK_3	0.455	0.781	Valid
LK_4	0.444	0.785	Valid
LK_5	0.576	0.762	Valid
LK_6	0.541	0.771	Valid
LK_7	0.763	0.723	Valid
LK_8	0.567	0.764	Valid

**Tabel 3. 2. Career Development (PK)
Scale Reliability Test Results**

Item	Item-Rest Correlation	α	Conclusion
Scale Summary	-	0.872	Reliable
PK_1	0.483	0.874	Valid
PK_2	0.462	0.876	Valid
PK_3	0.596	0.863	Valid
PK_4	0.79	0.841	Valid
PK_5	0.674	0.855	Valid
PK_6	0.843	0.826	Valid

**Tabel 3. 3. Employee Retention (RK)
Scale Reliability Test Results**

Item	Item-Rest Correlation	α	Conclusion
Scale Summary	-	0.917	Reliable
RK_1	0.62	0.918	Valid
RK_2	0.747	0.905	Valid
RK_3	0.823	0.896	Valid
RK_4	0.859	0.897	Valid
RK_5	0.871	0.893	Valid
RK_6	0.71	0.908	Valid

The results confirmed that the Cronbach's Alpha values for all three variables were substantially above the minimum threshold of 0.70. Specifically, Work Environment yielded 0.796, Career Development 0.872, and Employee Retention 0.917. Therefore, the entire instrument is declared reliable and consistent in measuring the variables of the study.

RESULTS

From the distributed questionnaires, the researcher obtained 32 valid responses from employees

across the two Restaurant X branches (Surabaya and Tuban).

**Tabel 3. 4. Table of Descriptive
Statistics of Research Variables**

Variabel	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Min	Max
(LK)	32	4.186	0.485	3.25	5
(PK)	32	3.95	0.64	2.43	4.71
(RK)	32	3.857	0.736	2.14	4.71

After calculating the average scores for each variable, the following mean values were obtained:

- **Work Environment** = 4.186
- **Career Development** = 3.950
- **Employee Retention** = 3.875

Multiple linear regression analysis was conducted using JASP software.

**Tabel 3. 5. Table of Multiple Linear
Regression Coefficients**

Variabel	Unstandardi zed Coeff. (B)	Std. Erro r	Standardiz ed Coeff. (β)	t	Sig. (p)
(Consta nt)	-0.902	0.6	-	1.50 2	0.14 4
(LK)	0.489	0.21 4	0.322	2.29	0.02 9
(PK)	0.686	0.16 2	0.596	4.23 9	< 0.00 1

The results showed a Coefficient of Determination (R^2) of 0.745, indicating that approximately 74.5% of the variance in employee retention is explained by the combined influence of the work environment and career development. The Adjusted R^2 value was 0.728, suggesting that the model is strong and does not suffer from overfitting.

The ANOVA results showed a significance value of $p < 0.001$, indicating that the overall regression model is statistically significant in explaining the dependent variable (employee retention).

The partial regression coefficients (β) and significance levels of each independent variable are as follows:

- **Work Environment:** $\beta = 0.489$, $p = 0.029$
- **Career Development:** $\beta = 0.686$, $p < 0.001$

These results demonstrate that both independent variables have a positive and statistically significant effect on employee retention, with career development showing a stronger influence compared to the work environment.

Discussion

The findings of this study robustly indicate that both career development and the work environment at Restaurant X have a significant and positive effect on employee retention [13]. This outcome aligns with the tenets of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs [4] and Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory [11], which suggest that both basic needs (hygiene factors, such as a supportive environment) and higher-order needs (motivators, such as career growth) must be addressed to maximize employee stability [16].

Specifically, this result reinforces the findings [12] who observed a strong role for career development in employee retention in the broader hospitality industry, and [20] whose study confirmed the positive effect of a supportive work environment in the service sector. Conversely, this finding also expands the literature by providing a specific context for high-skill roles like steak chefs. While previous studies [18] emphasize work environment factors, our findings affirm that amidst the challenging conditions (heat, high work pressure) in the Indonesian steakhouse kitchen [9], the provision of basic necessities like safety, adequate facilities, and effective communication serves as a crucial foundation to prevent dissatisfaction, while still proving that these factors remain statistically significant [1].

The results further show that career development ($\beta = 0.686$) has a substantially stronger impact on

employee retention compared to the work environment ($\beta = 0.489$). This finding is particularly salient for high-skill, high-turnover roles like steak chefs in Indonesia. The increased magnitude suggests that for specialized workers, opportunities for self-actualization such as receiving specialized training, obtaining certification, and having a clear promotion trajectory are more powerful motivators for long-term commitment than simply having a comfortable daily environment. This aligns with the high value placed on professional advancement by skilled culinary professionals [10]. In essence, while a positive work environment prevents turnover (Hygiene Factor), clear career development drives loyalty and retention (Motivator Factor) [5;7].

The findings of this study offer significant practical implications for the wider Indonesian restaurant industry, especially for establishments relying on skilled specialty chefs. Management should view career development not as an operational cost, but as a strategic investment to stabilize the workforce. Specifically, restaurants should develop clear, timed career ladder programs for chefs, detailing the path from Commis Chef to Executive Chef, coupled with regular, relevant skills training. Furthermore, while career development is the strongest motivator, the management must not neglect hygiene factors. Implementing standard operating procedures for improving physical kitchen safety and fostering a positive, communicative social atmosphere will minimize basic dissatisfaction, creating a robust framework where career growth can then maximize retention across Indonesian steakhouses [6; 15].

CONCLUSION

Based on the research conducted, this study successfully addresses a significant gap in the literature by quantifying the influence of career development and work environment specifically on employee retention among highly specialized steak chefs. The findings confirm that both factors are crucial determinants of stability in this high-turnover culinary segment, with career development emerging as the stronger motivator. As a direct result of these findings, the authors recommend that Restaurant X continue to focus on improving workplace conditions and providing a well-structured, long-term career development program. The findings indicate that investing in these two areas can significantly reduce employee turnover and enhance the retention of skilled and potential workers.

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Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

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